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Jakarta.

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Dear Khun Charupan,

When I was in Bangkok I was glad to meet you and my other friends again in Khun Sujin's house and also in the temple. I appreciate it that all of you help Khun Sujin to explain the Dhamma to others, be it in the way of printing books, transcribing Khun Sujin's radio-talks or translating. The copies of the tapes made by Khun Sukorn when your group had Dhamma discussions in India are of great benefit to many people. I listen to them often. Khun Sujin told me that Khun Sukorn sent one set of these tapes to a blind monk in Bangkok, but that the monk did not receive them. Instead of having aversion Khun Sukorn rejoiced since he thought of the benefit which someone else who received these tapes would have. He then sent another set to the blind monk. The monk wanted to show his appreciation by arranging to send fresh milk to all those who would be present on Sunday in the temple (Wat Bovornives) listening to Khun Sujin's lecture. I happened to be present when the milk was given and thus I could also rejoice in the monk's kind and thoughtful gesture. My husband commented that this sounds like a story from the suttas in the Buddha's time. He appreciated it that Khun Sukorn, instead of being annoyed about the loss of tapes thought of someone else's benefit. When there is wise attention to the object which is experienced at that moment there can be wholesome consciousness instead of unwholesome consciousness.

You asked my comment on a few Dhamma questions. These are questions we all have and I find it helpful to think about the answers since this gives me an opportunity to consider Dhamma. I will repeat your questions and comment on them.

Question: What is the characteristic of fear and how can it be overcome? I have fear of old age, sickness and death. I fear sickness and death of those who are dear to me. I have many kinds of fears. I also fear an unhappy rebirth. So long as one is not a 'stream-enterer' (sotāpanna), the noble person who has attained the first stage of enlightenment, one may be reborn in an unhappy plane where there is no opportunity to develop right understanding of the phenomena of our life. The good deeds (wholesome kamma) one performs in this life are no guarantee for a happy rebirth. A bad deed (unwholesome kamma) performed even in a past life may condition an unhappy rebirth.

Answer: Fear can be a form of aversion and then it is unwholesome. When there is aversion we do not like the object which is experienced at that moment. We tend to cling to pleasant objects and to have

aversion towards unpleasant objects. Aversion can be slight or it can be stronger, it may be hate. It can also take the form of fear and dread. When there is fear we shrink back from the object which is experienced and would like to flee from it. Or we may think with worry and dread about an unpleasant event which may happen in the future, such as old age, sickness and death, or an unhappy rebirth.

Fear arises so long as there are still conditions for its arising. It cannot be eradicated at once, only the 'non-returner' (anāgāmi), the noble person who has attained the third stage of enlightenment, has eradicated it completely. The development of right understanding of the phenomena which appear in our life is the only way leading to the eradication of fear. When fear ^(appears) we can learn to see it as it is: only a reality which arises because of its own conditions ^{and} which does not belong to a self. Fear is conditioned by ignorance and by clinging. We cling to all the pleasant objects and we fear to lose them. We read in the 'Gradual Sayings' (Book of the Sixes, Ch III, par. 3, Fear) about different names given to sense-desires, in order to show their dangers. One of these names is fear. We read:

... And wherefore, monks, is fear a name for sense-desires?

Monks, impassioned by sensuous passions, bound by

passionate desire, neither in this world is one free from fear, nor in the next world is one free from fear. Therefore 'fear' is a name for sense-desires....

In order to develop right understanding there should be awareness of any reality which appears and we should not reject anything as object of awareness. When fear appears it can be object of awareness.

We may have theoretical understanding of the fact that we cannot

- 0) control any reality which arises and that we thus cannot control the rebirth-consciousness of the next life. However, we still may be troubled by fear of rebirth. It is love of 'self' which conditions this fear. We are worried about what will happen to the 'self' after we die and we are afraid that this 'self' will not be successful in the development of understanding of realities in the next life. The 'streamenterer' does not worry about what would happen to a self, because he has eradicated belief in a self. Moreover, he has no more conditions for an unhappy rebirth. So long as one is ^(meta) "stream-enterer" one clings to a self and there are conditions for an unhappy rebirth.

It is understandable that we worry about the possibility of developing right understanding in a next life. However, we should remember that a moment of awareness of a reality which appears through one of the six doors is never lost; it conditions the arising of awareness again, later on. Also awareness which arises now is

Conditioned, it is conditioned by moments of listening to the Dhamma and considering it, moments which arose in the past, even in past lives. Even so awareness which arises now, although it does not stay, conditions awareness in the future because it can be accumulated from moment to moment. Even if the next birth would be in an unhappy plane, where there is no opportunity to develop right understanding, there will be following lives again in other planes where the development of understanding ^(can) continue. Even the Bodhisatta was once reborn in a hell plane, but after that life he was reborn in the human plane where he continued to develop right understanding of realities.

Unwholesome fear, which is a form of aversion, is harmful for mind and body. However, there is also wholesome fear, which is fear of unwholesomeness and its consequences. This fear is different from aversion. Unwholesome consciousness (akusala citta) is accompanied by unwholesome mental factors (akusala cetasikas) and wholesome consciousness (kusala citta) is accompanied by beautiful mental factors (sobhana cetasikas). Mental factors each perform their own function while they assist the consciousness they accompany. Among the beautiful mental factors which accompany each type of wholesome consciousness ^(there) are 'moral shame' or shame of unwholesomeness, and 'fear of blame' or fear of the consequences of unwholesomeness. When these two mental factors perform ^(There can be) their functions there cannot be unwholesome consciousness at that moment. Wholesome fear of the danger of being in the cycle of birth and death. We can with right understanding see the disadvantages of the imperfections and defilements which lead to rebirth. So long as there are ignorance and clinging there has to be rebirth again and again. Wholesome fear of the danger of rebirth can urge us to persevere with the development of right understanding until all defilements are eradicated. Then there will be no more rebirth.

When the Buddha was still a Bodhisatta he developed right understanding with patience and perseverance in order to attain Buddhahood and thus to be able to teach other beings as well the way leading to the end of birth. The 'Mūgapakkha Jātaka' (VI, no. 538) gives an impressive account of the Bodhisatta's heroism. He never was neglectful of his task of developing wisdom, since he had a wholesome fear of rebirth in hell. He had to suffer severe tribulations, but he was always perfectly composed and never showed any weak point. When we are in difficult situations do we have perseverance to develop

right understanding of realities? We may find it difficult to be aware of whatever reality appears through one of the six doors, in particular when we are very busy or when we are in the company of other people. We could consider such circumstances as a test or an examination we have to pass. If we fail we have to begin again and again.

We read in the 'Mūghapakkha Jātaka' that the Bodhisatta was born as the son of the King of Kasi and received the name Temiya. He remembered that in a former life when he was a king he condemned people to death. As a result of his unwholesome kamma he was reborn in hell. After that he was reborn as Prince Temiya. When he remembered his former lives he decided that he did not want to succeed his father as king and therefore he pretended to be cripple, deaf and dumb. Five hundred infants born to the concubines of the King were his companions. When they cried for milk he did not cry, reflecting that to die of thirst would be better than to reign as king and risk rebirth in hell. *Milk* → was given to after the proper time or not at all, but he did not cry. The nurses spent one year in trying him but did not discover any weak point. In order to test him the other children were given cakes and dainties and they quarreled and struck one another. The Bodhisatta would not look at the cakes and dainties. He said: "O Temiya, eat the cakes and dainties if you wish for hell." People kept on trying him in many ways but he was always patient and composed, realizing the danger of an unhappy rebirth. People tried to frighten him with a wild elephant and with serpents but ^{they} did not succeed. They tempted him with pleasant objects. Performances of mimes were given and the other children shouted "bravo" and laughed, but Temiya did not want to look and remained motionless, reflecting that in hell there never would be a moment of laughter and joy. In order to know whether he was really deaf they tested him by a burst of sound made by conchblowers, but they could not through a whole day detect in him any confusion of thought or any disturbance of hand or foot, or even a single start." They smeared his body with molasses and put him in a place infested with flies which bit him, but he remained motionless and perfectly apathic. When he was sixteen years old they tried to tempt him with beautiful women who were dancing and singing. We read: "... but he looked

at them in his perfect wisdom and stopped his inhalations and exhalations in fear lest they should touch his body, so that his body became quite rigid."

The Bodhisatta looked with perfect composure and with wisdom at the beautiful women. While he was motionless during his trials and tests he was not idle, he was mindful. In order to attain Buddhahood he had to develop right understanding with perseverance. He was mindful of whatever reality appeared, no matter in what situation. Although this is not mentioned in the Jātakas all the time, it is implied.

Finally the King was advised to bury him alive. When the charioteer was digging the hole for his grave Temiya was adorned by Sakka¹⁾ with heavenly ornaments. He then told the charioteer that he was not cripple, deaf and dumb. He became an ascetic and preached to his parents about impermanence:

It is death who smites this world, old age who watches at our gate,
And it is the nights which pass and win their purpose soon or late.

As when the lady at her loom sits weaving all the day,
Her task grows ever less and less-- so waste our lives away.
As speeds the hurrying river's course on, with no backward flow,
So in its course the life of men does ever forward go;
And as the river sweeps away trees from its banks upturn,
So are we men by age and death in headlong ruin born.

He explained to his father that he did not want the kingdom, stating that wealth, youth, wife and children and all other joys do not last. He said :

Do what you have to do today, who can ensure the morrow's sun?
Death is the Master-general who gives his guarantee to none.

These words can remind us not to put off our task of developing right understanding of any reality which appears. The Bodhisatta was unshakable in his resolution to develop right understanding. Also when he was put to severe tests he did not prefer anything else to the development of wisdom. Are we resolute as well? Or are we forgetful of what is really worthwhile in our life? Wisdom is more precious than any kind of possession, honour or praise.

After I had written about the Bodhisatta Temiya, there were conditions to consider again the patience of the Bodhisatta with regard to the development of understanding. That same evening my husband and I had to attend an official Rotary dinner. My husband was placed at the head table, but I was separated from him and placed somewhere —————>
^{1) King of Devas, heavenly beings.}

else, at a side-table, in the midst of people I did not know very well. There were moments of aversion, but I also remembered Khun Sujin's remarks that it is good to be 'nobody', not 'somebody'. We like to be 'somebody' but in reality, in the ultimate analysis, there are no people, only conditioned mental phenomena and physical phenomena. In order to become really convinced of the truth it is urgent to develop understanding of colour, sound, or any other reality which appears now. We had to wait for our food for a long time since there were many speeches. I remembered Bodhisatta Temiya who was patient and composed in all circumstances. Since he saw the danger of rebirth in hell he never was neglectful as to the development of wisdom. He said to himself when he was tortured, "Worse than these tortures are the tortures in hell." I had moments of aversion but I also remembered the conversation about aversion you had with Khun Sujin in India, which I heard on the tape. You spoke about having aversion because you had awareness only of hardness and softness and not of colour or seeing. Khun Sujin said that thinking with aversion is also a reality, it arises because of its appropriate conditions and cannot be controlled by a self. Also aversion can be object of awareness so that it can be realized as not self. We should continue to develop understanding of each reality which appears and not leave out unpleasant realities. When the food was finally served that evening I had attachment to flavour, but also attachment can be an object of awareness. Although there cannot be clear understanding yet after only a few moments of awareness we can begin again and again in order to develop it.

Although the evening was not pleasant or interesting, when there is mindfulness time is not wasted. There were ceremonies such as the instalment of the new board and the exchange of banners with visitors of other Rotary Clubs. I noticed that people attached great importance to such ceremonies, but then, don't we all attach importance to the events of our life: to what people say or do to us, to our likes and dislikes? So long as we do not see realities as they are, as only mental phenomena and physical phenomena (nāma and rūpa) which arise because of conditions, we will find ourselves very important and we will be anxious about what will happen to the 'self'.

The "Mūghapakkha Jātaka" can remind us to

consider the danger of being in the cycle of birth and death, ^{and then} there can be, instead of unwholesome fear, wholesome fear so that we are urged to be aware at this moment.

Question. In order to lead a wholesome life is it sufficient to keep the five precepts? I feel that so long as one does not harm others there are no defilements. Is that right?

Answer: We may keep the precepts but that does not mean that we have eradicated defilements. Only the noble persons who have attained the fourth and last stage of enlightenment, the "arahats" are without defilements. We should develop understanding of our different types of consciousness and then we will discover that there are many more unwholesome moments of consciousness than wholesome moments.

There are different degrees of defilements, they can be coarse, medium or subtle. Evil deeds through body, speech and mind are coarse defilements. But even when we do not commit evil deeds there are countless moments of unwholesome consciousness and these are medium defilements. For example, attachment or aversion may not motivate an unwholesome deed, but they are still unwholesome and thus dangerous. Unwholesome consciousness which arises falls away but the unwholesome tendency is accumulated and it can condition the arising of unwholesomeness again. The unwholesome tendencies which are accumulated are subtle defilements. Even though they are called subtle, they are dangerous. They are like microbes infesting the body; they can become active at any time. So long as they have not been eradicated they can condition the arising of unwholesome consciousness and of unwholesome deeds, and we have to continue in the cycle of birth and death.

Different objects are experienced through the five sense-doors of eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body sense and through the mind-door. On account of the objects which are experienced defilements

← tend to arise. Visible object, for example, is experienced by seeing-consciousness through the eye-door. Seeing-consciousness experiences only visible object, it does not know anything else and at that moment there is no like or dislike of the object. →
However, shortly after the seeing has fallen away there are moments of consciousness which are either wholesome or unwholesome. When we are not engaged with generosity, with morality in abstaining from evil, or with other kinds of wholesomeness, unwholesome consciousness has the opportunity to arise. Clinging is likely to arise very often after seeing, after the other sense-cognitions and also when we are thinking.

When we are thinking about events or about people the thinking is done either with wholesome consciousness or with unwholesome consciousness. We often think with clinging or attachment, —————→

←————— Attachment can be accompanied by pleasant feeling or by indifferent feeling . When it is accompanied by indifferent feeling we may not notice it. We like to perceive all the familiar things around us, such as furniture or other possessions. We would not like to miss noticing them and this shows our clinging. When we are sitting, do we like softness? When we sit on a hard floor , there is bound to be aversion. Aversion is conditioned by clinging. When there is awareness of different realities we will know that there are many more unwholesome moments of consciousness than we ever thought. It is better to know the truth than to deceive ourselves.

Even when we can keep the precepts and do not transgress them for a long time, it does not mean that we will never neglect them. So long as we have not become a "stream-enterer" there are still conditions for unwholesome deeds, which may produce an unhappy rebirth. When there is, for example, danger for our life , we may neglect the precepts . Only right understanding of the mental phenomena and physical phenomena of our life . can eventually, when one has attained to the stage of the "stream-enterer" , condition purity of morality to the degree that one never neglects again the five precepts.

Question: Although I know that gain, honour and praise do not last and can only arise when there are conditions for their arising, I cannot help being distressed when I do not get the rank or position I believe I deserve. What can I do in order to have less ambitions?

Answer: We are ambitious because we find ourselves important. Our clinging makes us unhappy. While we strive to get something there is clinging. Also when we obtain what we want we

keep on holding tight. Clinging is the cause of endless frustrations. We want the 'self' to become more important but then it will be all the harder to eradicate the idea of self. If we think more of others the self will become less important.

We may have reflected on the impermanence of ~~reali-~~ [←] ~~ties~~ [→] which arise because of conditions, on the impermanence of all pleasant objects, but if we do not develop direct understanding of the realities which appear, understanding is not strong enough to overcome clinging.

We should not only develop understanding when we are disappointed and unhappy, but we should begin right now. If we do not begin now how can there ever ^{be} less clinging to the self? We cling so much to our body, but in reality there are only different elements: solidity, cohesion, temperature and motion. The element of solidity, for example, which appears as hardness or softness can be directly experienced through the bodysense, without there being the need to think about it or to give it a name. When hardness appears there can be awareness of it and then understanding can see that it is only hardness, not a body which belongs to us. Hardness is only hardness, it does not matter whether it is hardness of what we call the body or hardness outside. If there is awareness of it when it appears we will begin to see it as an element, not self. When right understanding

is being developed we will also see that realities such as honour or praise are only elements and that they do not belong to a self. Thus there will be more confidence in the Dhamma and we will consider the Dhamma more precious than honour or praise.

We can easily be infatuated by gains, favours or flattery. They are treacherous, because they seem desirable, but they lead to misery. In the 'Kindred Sayings' (II, Nidāna Vagga, Ch XVII, Kindred Sayings on Gain and Favours) there are fortythree suttas which point out to us the dangers of gains, favours and flatteries. They are as dangerous as a fisherman's hook to the fish, as a thunderbolt, as a poisoned dart which wounds a man, as a hurricane which hurls a bird apart. People who do not easily lie tell deliberately lies when they are overcome by desire for gains, favours and flatteries. We read in par. 10 of this section:

Dire, monks, are gains, favours and flattery, a bitter, harsh obstacle in the way of arriving at uttermost safety.

Concerning this matter, I see one person overcome, and whose mind is possessed by favours, another who is overcome and possessed by lack of favours, ^{the} yet another who is overcome and possessed by both favours and lack of them-- I see one and all,

at the separation of the body after death reborn in the Waste,
the Woeful Way, the Downfall, Hell.

So dire, monks, are gains... Verily thus must you train yourselves: "When gains, favours, and flattery come to us, we will put them aside, nor when they come shall they take lasting hold on our hearts."

In whom, when favours fall upon him, or
When none are shown, the mind steadfast, intent,
Sways not at all, for earnest is his life,
Him of rapt thought, (of will) unfaltering,
Of fine perception, of the vision seer,
Rejoicing that to grasp is his no more:
Him let the people call in truth Good Man.

With Mettā ,
Nina.